

## Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-03

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /004 R

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DRAFTED BY: ARA/LA:GECHAFIN:GMR

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P 301730Z MAY 75

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY

UNCLAS STATE 126162

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROGERS

FOLLOWING REPEAT MEXICO 4653 ACTION SECSTATE 29 MAY 75

QUOTE

UNCLAS MEXICO 4653

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, MX

SUBJ: HIDALGO TEXAS LABOR VIOLENCE

REF: MEXICO 4602

FOLLOWING RECEIVED FROM AMCONSUL MATAMOROS REPEATED FOR  
DEPT. INFO.

QTE

TO: MEXICO

FOR: DCM - EXCOUNS - POL

FROM : SMITH

SUB: TEXAS LABOR VIOLENCE: MEXICAN RESIDENTS INVOLVED

EFFORTS BY TEXAS CHAPTER OF UNITED FARM WORKERS TO ORGANIZE  
FIELD WORKERS IN LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY OF TEXAS RESULTED IN  
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A SHOOTING INCIDENT ON MONDAY MAY 26TH IN HIDALGOCOUNTY.

TEN PERSONS WERE WOUNDED IN VARYING DEGREE; ALL TEN PERSONS WERE ALLEGEDLY ORGANIZERS FOR UFW, ALL ARE OF MEXICAN ORIGIN BUT CURRENT CITIZENSHIP OR IMMIGRATION STATUS UNKNOWN; ALL TEN ARE APPARENTLY RESIDENTS OF REYNOSA, MEXICO.

THIS LAST FACT HAS AROUSED MEDIA INTEREST ON BOTH SIDES OF RIVER AND MAY PROJECT AN INTERNAL US LABOR PROBLEM INTO SOMETHING OF AN INTERNATIONAL INCIDENT, AT LEAST ON THE PAGES OF JINGOISTIC NEWSPAPERS BOTH IN MEXICO AND TEXAS.

IT APPEARS THAT VARIOUS ELEMENTS OF THE MEDIA HAVE ALREADY CHOSEN SIDES IN THE DISPUTE AND REPORT THE INCIDENTS ACCORDING TO THEIR BIAS RATHER THAN ON BASIS OF FACT, HENCE REPORTS ARE CONFLICTING AND HIGHLY CONFUSING. A FEW SALIENT ELEMENTS IN THE STORY HAVE EMERGED:

UFW ORGANIZERS UNDER ANTONIO ORENDAIN, PRESIDENTE OF THE TEXAS CHAPTER, ARE ATTEMPTING TO ORGANIZE FIELD WORKERS IN THE AREA, AND HAVE DECLARED A "STRIKE" AGAINST LANDOWNERS REFUSING TO ACCEPT CLOSED-SHOP IN THEIR FIELDS. CURRENTLY, THIS INVOLVES THE CANTALOUPE AND MELON HARVESTERS WHO, ACCORDING TO UFW, ARE PAID ONLY 1.60/HOUR INSTEAD OF MINIMUM WAGE OF 2.20/HOUR.

THE INCIDENT AT "EL TEJANO" FARM NEAR HIDALGO, TEXAS OCCURRED WHEN NON-UNION FARM HANDS WERE ENGAGED IN HARVESTING. ACCORDING TO OWNER/OPERATOR C.L. MILLER, UFW "ORGANIZERS OR SYMPATHIZERS" CAME INTO THE FIELDS ATTEMPTING TO INTERFERE WITH THE WORK. THERE WAS SOME VIOLENCE AND DAMAGE TO THE CROP; MILLER SAYS HE WARNED UFW PEOPLE AGAINST TRESPASS; THE WARNING WAS IGNORED; MILLER FIRED (BIRD SHOT) MANY TIMES, WOUNDING SOME TEN PERSONS IN ALL, ONE OR TWO SERIOUSLY ENOUGH TO REQUIRE HOSPITALIZATION, REMAINDER ONLY SLIGHTLY.

ACCORDING TO RADIO/T.V. UFW IMMEDIATELY FILED CHARGES AGAINST MILLER, AND TEN WARRANTS FOR HIS ARREST WERE ISSUED. MILLER CALLED AT OFFICE JUSTICE OF PEACE, POSTED 15 THOUSAND BOND, AND WAS RELEASED.

LOCAL MEXICAN NEWSPAPERS OF MAY 27 MADE ONE-DAY SENSATION OF INCIDENT, USING RATHER PROVOCATIVE HEADLINES SUCH AS "TEN MEXICAN FARM HANDS WOUNDED BY TEXAN FARMER". MOST ACCOUNTS CLEARLY FAVORED

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THE UFW CAUSE AND STRESSED THAT ALL THAT THE WORKERS WANTED WAS TO BE PAID "FAIR" WAGES LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE.

CURIOUSLY, THERE HAS BEEN NO MEDIA FOCUS AS YET ON THE QUESTION OF THE IMMIGRATION STATUS OF THE WORKERS. CONSULATE HAS QUERIED I&NS OFFICERS ON POINT, AND THEY STOUTLY MAINTAIN THAT, TO BEST OF THEIR KNOWLEDGE, THE MAJORITY OF BOTH THE UFW SYMPATHIZERS AND THE NON-UNION FIELD HANDS HAVE LEGAL STATUS TO WORK IN US,

NO MATTER WHERE THEY MAY RESIDE. IT IS NOTED THAT MANY OF THESE WORKERS ARE SONS AND EVEN GRANDSONS OF MIGRANTS AND BRACEROS AND THAT MANY WERE BORN IN US, HAVE CREDENTIALS AS USCIS, BUT FOR VARIOUS REASONS PREFER TO LIVE ON MEXICAN SIDE. IN I&NS VIEW, IT WOULD BE ENTIRELY ERRONEOUS TO SEE THE UNION-ORGANIZING ISSUE IN TERMS OF LEGAL VS. ILLEGAL FIELD WORKERS--THIS IS NOT A SIGNIFICANT ISSUE, AND THE MATTER SEEMS TO BE MUCH MORE COMPLEX. PERHAPS A MUCH MORE SIGNIFICANT ELEMENT IN THE CONTROVERSY IS THE FACT OF LARGE-SCALE UNDER-AND UN-EMPLOYMENT IN THE TEXAS COUNTIES ALONG THE BORDER. WITH LARGE POOLS OF LEGAL JOB-SEEKERS AVAILABLE EVEN WITHOUT INCLUDING THE ILLEGAL ALIENS, EMPLOYERS ARE NATURALLY ACCUSTOMED TO PAYING WAGES CONSIDERABLY UNDER THE LEGAL MINIMUM, AND ARE DETERMINED TO CONTINUE IN DOING SO. MANY OF THE FIELD WORKERS ARE RELUCTANT TO JOIN UNIONS BECAUSE THEY FEAR THEY WILL LOSE WHATEVER CHANCE FOR WORK THEY NOW HAVE. IT IS AN OLD FAMILIAR STORY IN MOST AREAS EMPLOYING SWEAT LABOR, AND PARTICULARLY IN THE VALLEY, WHERE LABOR HAS ALWAYS BEEN A SURPLUS COMMODITY.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS WILL BE REPORTED AS WARRANTED, ALTHOUGH IT APPEARS THAT THE "INTERNATIONAL INCIDENT" ASPECTS ARE DIMINISHING IN EMPHASIS AMONGST THE MEDIA. UNQUOTE  
JOVA

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